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PLENARY MEETING

Wednesday, 1 December 1993
at 3 p.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. INSANALLY
(Guyana)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 34

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

(a) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/522, A/48/607)

(b) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/48/L.32)

The PRESIDENT *(interpretation from French)*: I should like to propose that, if there are no objections, the list of speakers in the debate on agenda item 34 be closed at 4.30 p.m. today.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT *(interpretation from French)*: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. YAACOBI (Israel): Mr. President, in addressing you and the Assembly, may I also address the former President of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Navon, who is with us here today in the visitors' gallery.

After more than 40 years of cold war and polarization the people of the world are striving to build a better future, trying to overcome ethnic, religious and national conflicts. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union young democracies are struggling to lay the cornerstones of peaceful and prosperous futures. In Western Europe the European Union has drafted a plan of great vision. Together, these countries are building prosperous lives on the solid basis of regional cooperation.

In the Middle East too historic changes are breaking down the battlements of a century of conflict and war. As we look forward to an era of prosperity and cooperation, I think back to a time when Jews and Arabs flourished together 1,000 years ago in Spain, when we shared a Golden Age. Now, the time has come for us to seize the opportunity to create a new Golden Age, to enjoy the right to our own lives and destinies. Now it is time to lay the foundations for peace, stability, security, economic progress and human advancement in the embattled Middle East.

We broke ground 14 years ago with the Camp David Accords, the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab State. This year, on 13 September, on the same table upon which we sealed those Accords, we signed the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO. On 14 September Israel and Jordan signed an agenda for negotiations towards a peace treaty. We thank the United States for the constructive role it has played in all these achievements, and we thank the Russian Federation, Norway and all the others whose support has helped encourage these developments.

These political breakthroughs must be accompanied by economic growth and development in order to build a stable peace. Economic progress and human progress are twin pillars that will support the political achievements.

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ENGLISH

On 1 October 46 countries and organizations came together at the International Donors' Conference in Washington, D.C. They pledged $2 billion over five years to finance social and economic development in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The United Nations established a high-level Task Force to achieve the same goal. This financial backing ensures that the agreements will stand firmly on two legs, one political and one economic.

Israel and the Palestinians are facing opposition, but we believe that those who look to the future will prevail over those who are trapped in the past. We both focus now on implementing the Declaration of Principles. Together, our coordinating committees are hammering out the details of implementation according to the agreed timetable.

We are making progress with the Palestinians and 13 other Arab delegations in multilateral negotiations as well. There, we are creating opportunities for regional cooperation. Forty-seven countries and international organizations, including the United Nations, are participating in the multilateral talks. Five working groups are discussing refugees, arms control, regional economic cooperation, water, and environment, respectively. Alone, each country can do little about those issues, but together we can make great progress.

For the first time, all States participating in the talks on regional economic development agreed on a plan of action. In that plan 35 projects, workshops and studies in diverse areas will be started. For the first time in the multilateral negotiations, talks about the Middle East among the countries of the Middle East are being held in the Middle East. Egypt acted as host to the environment working group in mid-November; Tunisia welcomed the group on refugees a month earlier; in April 1994 the working group on water may convene in Oman.

For the first time, we are seeing true breakthroughs in both the bilateral and the multilateral spheres. But our work is nowhere near completion. The peace process would be greatly helped by a summit in Damascus or Jerusalem between President Assad of Syria and Prime Minister Rabin of Israel. Let us create another psychological and political breakthrough, as Egyptian President Sadat did when he came to Jerusalem in November 1977.

Let us enjoy a quiet, secure border with Lebanon. Israel has no territorial claims in Lebanon. We look forward to a peace treaty and hope that the Lebanese Government will assert its sovereignty and disarm the terrorists who use its land as a base for attacks on Israel.

We also call upon King Hussein of Jordan to sign a peace treaty with Israel. As Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said in this Hall:

> "... we live side by side with the Jordanian Kingdom, and what is so obvious geographically must become clear politically." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 6th meeting, p. 22)*

A treaty would put the capstone on the advances we have already made towards peaceful relations between our countries. We desire a comprehensive peace, based on individual treaties with the Gulf States, the North African States, and all other Arab and Muslim countries.

I want to express my regret over the expressions of violence, the many injuries and the losses of human life, and over the absence of restraint and tolerance, despite the opening of new horizons before us all. I believe that the difficult situation will pass. I believe that all sides know that we have passed the point of no return and are on our way to a new era of peace, security, and economic and social progress.

During yesterday's debate I said:

> "Of course, there are, and will be, ups and downs in the process. This is a time of transition, but now is the time to realize the simple truth: We can choose either painful compromise or perpetual conflict. The implementation will succeed if both parties work persistently, pragmatically and professionally towards this end. I believe both sides are proceeding in this spirit, despite moments of hardship and outbreaks of violence." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 66th meeting, pp. 1-2)*

Let us progress quickly, for threats to peace will grow with time. Nuclear proliferation and an arms race cast long shadows over the Middle East, and dangerous Muslim fanatics threaten to bring a dark age to the region.

Iranian-backed groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad have targeted the peace process and its Arab and Israeli supporters. This is part of their broad strategy to destabilize the entire region and fulfil their dreams of expansion and domination. When we signed the Declaration of Principles with the PLO, and the world welcomed our progress with a shower of blessings and warm wishes, the fanatics responded with a hail of threats and violence. Together with all responsible, moderate forces in the Middle East that seek a better future, we shall

fight terror with all our might and we shall pursue peace with all our resolve.

Albert Einstein once said:

"The world is a dangerous place to live - not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it."

It is time for the United Nations to support the peacemakers by adopting an attitude that reflects the changes in the Middle East. When bitter enemies take bold steps towards reconciliation, the United Nations must give its support and encouragement. We and the Palestinians have together chosen our road to peace and we ask the United Nations to support this choice.

It is time to remove from the agenda resolutions that contradict the Declaration of Principles. It is time to abandon obsolete, anachronistic resolutions that do not reflect the new realities in the Middle East. Resolutions wielded as political weapons at the height of the Arab-Israeli conflict have no place in this era of negotiation and reconciliation. In their place let us adopt resolutions that contribute to peace and demonstrate that the United Nations will rise to the challenges and opportunities of a changing world. I am pleased that a new draft resolution was submitted yesterday by the United States, Russia and Norway, supporting the peace process and its achievements, and calling for international assistance, regional cooperation and a comprehensive peace.

Four Israeli soldiers remain missing in action: Tzvi Feldman, Zechariah Baumel, Yehuda Katz and Ron Arad. We call upon those countries and organizations holding them to abide by international law, display humanitarian sensitivity and bring them home.

We also call upon our negotiating partners to lay down economic weapons and end the Arab boycott. The boycott can never be accepted, and certainly not when we are advancing peace. The boycott is an obstacle to peace that impedes prosperity and hurts all societies in the Middle East.

Arabs and Israelis should profit from economic cooperation, not suffer from economic warfare. Let us unite to create a better future, a future of peace and security, economic growth and social advancement. In this future, at least part of the $70 billion we collectively waste on weapons and belligerency will be invested in human progress. Science, education, health and technology will advance as we divert human energies and resources away from conflict. Economies will thrive as peace and stability generate growth and open opportunities for joint ventures. Consumer demand will increase as we shift funds from the military to the civilian sector. The threat of war and instability will no longer scare away foreign investment and tourism. In this new era we will raise the standard of living and improve the quality of life for all.

Israelis and Arabs will prosper together through cooperation. Indeed, with the Copenhagen Action Plan agreed in November we have already begun. We can integrate our infrastructure: seaports and airports, roads and railways, electricity grids and energy plants. Cairo, Jerusalem, Amman, Beirut and Damascus were all joined by road and rail before 1948. We will renew these links and we will create new ones. Commercial trucks will stream across borders on new highways. Tourists will flow from country to country on commercial flights and modern trains.

In Eilat, Aqaba, Gaza and Ashkelon we can build free trade zones that draw investment and create jobs. Israel and Jordan should jointly develop and maintain one deep-water seaport and one modern airport on the tiny strip where Eilat and Aqaba meet on the Red Sea. A new railway will become an overland bridge connecting the port in the Gulf of Eilat with ships in the Mediterranean Sea.

Open borders for tourism will bridge the gulf of understanding and create the economic interests to preserve tranquillity and peace. Nature and history have endowed our region with many wondrous attractions. Pilgrims of three religions seek their spiritual roots in Hebron, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Mecca. Vacationers flock to Tel Aviv and Sharm-el-Sheikh for beautiful beaches under blue skies and balmy weather, and travellers marvel at the incredible sights of Luxor, Petra, Baalbek and Timna. Cooperation in tourism will generate hundreds of thousands of jobs, strengthen our economies and fortify peace.

We shall reap great benefits if we sow the seeds of peace and cooperation now. Speaking at a dinner in honour of Israel's Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, the Secretary-General of the United Nations said:

"Now there is a new moment in time ... We have seen that negotiations can work ... We have seen a small seed of trust start to take root."

We still face difficulties as we make the agreement a reality. The enemies of peace are trying to prevent our success. But we will continue striving to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Peace is the foundation of security, regional cooperation, economic development and personal advancement. This is our

obligation to future generations - to the young, to our children. This is our obligation to ourselves, to our moral conviction. This is our obligation to the nations and people we represent. Let the international community represented here work in the same spirit, with the same sense of obligation and with the same dedication to this great goal.

Mr. ALLAGANY (Saudi Arabia) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The question of the Middle East still causes concern and anxiety to the international community as a whole. We have witnessed over the past few months developments which we hope will prove to be important steps towards a comprehensive, just and durable settlement to the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, the possibility of reaching a peaceful settlement in the Middle East did improve to a large extent with the launching of the peace process, in 1991, in Madrid, with the participation of all the parties directly concerned.

The other important fact today is that the international community has now reached consensus on the main principles of comprehensive settlement in the Middle East - namely, the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds and the Syrian Golan, in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); the implementation by Israel of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which stipulates withdrawal from southern Lebanon; respect of the right of all countries in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders; and recognition and implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially its right to self-determination.

Optimism has been generated by the Declaration of Principles that was signed by the PLO and the Israeli Government in Washington on 13 September 1993, despite its limited character in the sense that it is an agreement on self-government in the Palestinian territories, beginning in Gaza and Jericho and a first step towards the establishment of a comprehensive, lasting and just peace between Arabs and Israel. The agreement generated optimism because it is only natural that it will contribute to the settlement of the Palestinian question, which is the core of the Israeli-Arab conflict and will, thereby, contribute to a settlement between the Arabs and Israel.

This Palestinian-Israeli agreement has been widely welcomed in Palestinian, Arab and international circles. That welcome is an expression of a true desire for the establishment of peace in the Middle East. However, we believe that welcome should be accompanied, on the part of the international community, by the provision of the economic and developmental support needed for the establishment of the administrative structures that are required for the successful implementation of the agreement on self-government.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia took part in the International Donors' Conference that was held in Washington and announced that it would contribute $200 million in 1994 to support the economic and security infrastructures in the Palestinian territories. We believe that the international community must realize that the provision of such support is extremely necessary for the successful implementation of the agreement on self-government.

The consolidation of the underpinnings of peace in the Middle East requires the achievement of concrete results in respect of the main issues - especially that of Al-Quds, which is part of the occupied Arab territories. A matter that gives us cause for concern and anxiety today is the ruling, a few days ago, by the Israeli Supreme Court that the Al-Aqsa Mosque is an integral part of the land area of the State of Israel and that all maintenance and restoration works in the Mosque are subject to Israeli building and planning regulations and, antiquities laws.

This means that the Israeli occupation authorities intentionally interfere directly in the affairs of the Holy Mosque. This will lead to extremely serious conflicts in the Holy City. This new ruling constitutes a blatant violation of the status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and an encroachment on the competence of Islamic Waqfs, and a naked violation of United Nations resolutions relating to the position and status of Jerusalem, which declares as null and void any measures which purport to alter the legal status of the Holy City. The resolutions to which I refer include Security Council resolutions 252 (1968) and 267 (1969).

Israel must take confidence-building measures and demonstrate goodwill and good intentions as regards the settlement of the problems in the Middle East. These measures should embrace all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, and should include withdrawal from southern Lebanon. The question of the settlements and the return of the Palestinian refugees should be given the highest priority in the Middle East peace process.

Jewish extremists want to build 130 new settlements on the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, in addition to the 203 settlements now in existence. The council representing the settlers call this plan "This is My Country". According to today's issue of the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahazonoth*, it is a plan aimed at halting the withdrawal. All of these are omens that do not augur well at all for a security situation that is deteriorating in a manner which the news media have been bringing home to

us over the past few days. For this reason, we underscore the need for the Israeli occupation authorities to undertake confidence-building measures aimed at securing true peace in the region, instead of measures that will undermine and erode confidence and dispel hope in any settlement or peace in the region.

We in Saudi Arabia look forward to the day when security and stability will prevail in the region and hope that it will again be the oasis of prosperity and human progress that it was once before.

Mr. NOTERDAEME (Belgium) *(interpretation from French)*: The convening of the Madrid conference in October 1991 gave rise to hope for a new future for all the peoples of the Middle East. That hope began to be fulfilled on 13 September 1993 with the signing at Washington of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement, which the countries members of the European Union have hailed as a decisive turning-point in the peace process that has been under way for two years. To our mind, that agreement opens up broad prospects for a negotiated political solution to the entire Israel-Arab conflict. As for the European Union, it is committed to continuing to play an active, constructive and balanced role in the peace process. In the context of its foreign policy and common-security policy, the European Union intends to take common action to complement the Middle East peace process, by mobilizing the Union's political, economic and financial resources to support a comprehensive peace plan.

Cleaving to long-standing positions of principle, the European Union is firmly resolved to support the recent Israeli-Palestinian agreement both politically and economically. We intend to participate in any international arrangements it may engender and have undertaken to supplement our current programme of assistance with substantial financial commitments to enable the benefits of the agreement to be felt where the needs are the most urgent.

The success of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement - which is itself the outcome of a long process of talks brought to fruition by the courage and foresight of Israeli and Palestinian leaders - must now pave the way to a comprehensive peace in the region, a goal to which we are especially committed. The European Union hopes that there will be progress in the framework of other bilateral and multilateral talks on future cooperation. In that connection, we hope that Syria and Lebanon will now participate in these endeavours on the multilateral track of the peace process.

The European Union is following with keen interest the improving situation in Lebanon - although a renewal of tension there last summer showed yet again how fragile stability in that part of the Middle East will remain without a comprehensive settlement. We continue to press for the full restoration of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon, and reaffirm our firm support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). We stress again that the Force must be able to fulfil its mandate in the safest possible conditions.

The European Union wishes again to state that Iraq must comply without delay with all provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We hope that, in order to regain its place in the international community, Iraq will comply with all its obligations. But we are obliged to note that the situation to date is negative, as shown by Iraq's lack of respect for the inviolability of its international boundary with Kuwait and for that country's sovereignty in general. The policy of systematically repressing the Shiite community in the southern marshes and the continuing economic blockade against the northern provinces make the situation all the more discouraging. Moreover, Iraq must agree to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991), whose provisions are aimed at improving the living conditions of the civilian population of Iraq. The European Union welcomes Iraq's recent official unconditional acceptance of Security Council resolution 715 (1991). We hope that Iraq will commit itself to cooperate with the Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as part of the implementation of monitoring and verification plans.

With respect to the common effort against the scourge of international terrorism, the European Union is committed to Libya's full and prompt implementation of Security Council resolution 883 (1993).

The European Union is concerned at Iranian authorities' rejection of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement of 13 September. We hope Iran will abandon its negative position on that historic agreement and will speedily assume its proper role in promoting a comprehensive peace for the benefit of all the States of the region. Our concerns lie also with the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals and minorities in Iran. We continue to view the continuation of the death sentence imposed by *fatwa* against the writer Salman Rushdie as a clear violation of human rights and international law. Moreover, the European Union expects more transparency from Iran, with a view to ongoing monitoring of that country's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction.

I wish to conclude by stressing the firm commitment of the European Union to an active quest for lasting, comprehensive peace and stability for the benefit of all in

the Middle East. We shall continue to spare no effort to assist in reaching a comprehensive settlement in that region, a region to which we are bound by many past and present links and to which we feel very close.

Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Our debate on the situation in the Middle East takes place at an important juncture in the region's history. The peace process that started in Madrid has borne fruit, in that it has led to a nascent agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on mutual recognition, and to the adoption of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Progress has also been made on the Jordanian-Israeli negotiating track in that an agenda for negotiations between those two countries has been signed.

The fact that direct negotiations have begun and that such negotiations have resulted in an agreement according to which the withdrawal of Israeli forces from some of the occupied Palestinian territories will begin is cause for optimism, and gives us grounds for hope that the agreement will be a first step towards the full implementation of the true substance of the frame of reference of the peace process, namely Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), that true substance being the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace which includes withdrawal by Israel from all the Arab territories it occupied in 1967 and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate national rights.

We do not believe that it is overly optimistic to hope that progress will be made also on the Syrian-Israeli negotiating track toward complete peace between the two countries through the restoration of Syria's full sovereignty over its occupied lands in the Golan Heights. We are confident that the march towards peace is indivisible. We believe that, if the parties have the desire and sincere intentions, all the peoples of the region will come out in full support of any sacrifice required to reach a comprehensive peace.

It was said of some States in the past that they could not bear the burden of fighting a war on more than one front. However, it is difficult to justify delaying the march towards peace under the pretext that the struggle for peace could not be engaged on two or three fronts at one and the same time.

Egypt has striven for peace in difficult circumstances and has had to make many sacrifices, which have not deterred it from pursuing that option. Today, the provisions of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel which embody the sound interpretation of the peace-for-land formula, remain a mighty beacon and a model to be followed. It could be argued that, if it were not for the success of that pioneering experiment, the current peace process could never have been launched and would never have been destined to succeed.

Egypt attaches special importance to the multilateral negotiations on disarmament which, we hope, will lead to the achievement of the objective Egypt has striven for in the General Assembly and in other forums, namely a Middle East region that is free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Egypt has called for the renunciation of the concepts of hegemony, military superiority and the occupation of territories as a means of ensuring security. We have continued to reaffirm that comprehensive peace is the only true guarantee of the security of all parties. Under a comprehensive and lasting peace, the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons continues to cast a shadow that threatens the future of the entire region. Egypt, therefore, calls upon Israel to enter into serious negotiations on nuclear disarmament, to subject its nuclear facilities to international guarantees and to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Egypt is actively participating in the multilateral negotiations on regional cooperation in the Middle East as it believes that those negotiations could provide the incentive for all parties to achieve progress in bilateral talks towards that desired regional cooperation. Egypt has hosted recently the working group on the environment in the context of the multilateral negotiations.

We hope that we shall soon be able to view the United Nations documents on the Middle East as texts of reference in the study of history. We look forward to a future wherein the United Nations would play a fundamental role in assisting all the peoples of the Middle East to develop their economies and to improve their standards of living. We believe that the role the United Nations could play in supporting the Palestinian people in its first steps towards a just and comprehensive peace could be an example of that desired future role of our international Organization.

We believe we are close to achieving that objective. However, we need the international community's full support. Egypt, for its part, continues to do its utmost in helping along the peace negotiations. It now hosts the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli talks on the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and is urging Israel and the other parties to make similar progress on the other tracks. We hope that the General Assembly will continue firmly to support the principles upon which a just and comprehensive settlement of the struggle in the Middle

East must be based. We hope and believe that such a settlement will contribute largely to the creation of a new reality in the Middle East that would allow the region to regain its ability to participate in the progress of mankind.

Mr. PARAMESWARAN (Malaysia): The General Assembly has been seized of the issue of the Middle East conflict for almost as long as the United Nations has been in existence. Integral to this issue is the question of Palestine. Despite various efforts to find a comprehensive, overall settlement of this very complex problem, involving the interests of the Palestinian people, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and of a number of countries in the region, it is unfortunate that peace has eluded us.

The signing of the recent Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel relating to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip marks a new breakthrough in the steps towards a comprehensive and overall solution to the long protracted Middle East conflict. This unprecedented development, which we thought impossible in the past, has been able to take place because of the new state of international relations which now exists as a consequence of the end of the cold war.

When the Assembly considered agenda item 35, "Question of Palestine", two days ago, the PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles was widely welcomed by Member States. However, the momentum created by this initial step should not be lost. We therefore reiterate our call to the parties directly concerned to ensure the full and timely implementation of the various understandings arrived at in the recent Declaration of Principles.

The Declaration of Principles, however, is only the beginning in the long search for permanent peace in the Middle East. While it addresses the initial concerns of the Palestinian people and Israel, the other pending issues affecting the other States in the Middle East, such as Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, also need to be addressed expeditiously in the continuing efforts for a comprehensive settlement. These and other issues are relevant in the General Assembly's current consideration of agenda item 34, "The situation in the Middle East".

Malaysia has consistently voiced its support for a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict, one that would bring lasting peace and stability to all the countries in the region, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We are therefore optimistic that the political goodwill that propelled the signing of the recent PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles could now be extended to also finding solutions to the outstanding problems in the Middle East conflict. In this regard, Israel should now actively pursue negotiations which would bring about Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights as well as from other occupied Arab territories, consonant with the various resolutions of the United Nations.

We also hope that no Member State will take any action that would further complicate the search for a comprehensive solution to this problem. Member States should also strictly comply with General Assembly resolution 47/63 B of 11 December 1992, which deals with the transfer by some States of their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem, in violation of Security Council resolution 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980. In fact, Malaysia firmly believes that the question of Jerusalem itself should receive special consideration in the peace process.

There is also a need to consider other relevant issues, one of which is the prevalent belief that Israel possesses a nuclear capacity. This has undoubtedly engendered fears among the countries in the region and has to a large extent contributed to the arms build-up there. If Israel does in fact possess a nuclear capacity, then its nuclear activities and facilities should also be subject to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and inspections. On this nuclear issue, it is important that the United Nations be seen to be acting even-handedly in regard to all those countries which are alleged to have similar nuclear capacity. Malaysia reiterates its support for the establishment in the Middle East of a nuclear-weapons-free zone as well as a zone devoid of other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons.

We have this year seen positive developments in the search for permanent peace in the Middle East. This process must move ahead unhindered. Hopefully, when we take up this item again at next year's session we will be in a position to take note of further positive developments in the Middle East.

Mr. PITSUWAN (Thailand): It is with a renewed sense of pride and confidence in the merit of the international negotiating system that I address the Assembly this afternoon. Under the able leadership of our President, and inspired by the prospect of peace, harmony, common prosperity and unity, our civilized nations are witnessing the writing of a new chapter in history.

As we speak, a new light of hope is spreading across the Middle East with the mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Indeed, the world witnessed a new beginning when Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin shook hands on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington on 13 September 1993, signifying the first step in a five-year plan for a permanent

solution to the Middle East conflict. The Royal Thai Government congratulates both men on their wisdom, forethought and courage in bringing about what it is hoped will be the end of one of this century's most harrowing territorial disputes.

However, let us bear in mind that no stroke of a presidential pen can ensure peace and prosperity. On the contrary, recent euphoria has been marred by violence and bloodshed, exposing the fragility of the peace settlement. In the light of these events, the international community must continue to work with both parties to guarantee and ensure mutual harmony. My delegation urges all parties to render their full support to enable this peace settlement to become a durable and practical one. The Royal Thai Government will continue to monitor this positive development and render its assistance to the peace process through all peaceful means.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian self-government in the occupied territories is a welcome breakthrough in years of strife and stalemate. My Government hopes that the international community will soon recognize the national and political sovereignty of the Palestinian people. We call upon the United Nations to guide the peace process and ensure the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, independence and self-determination. Reaffirming our belief in the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, the Thai Government would likewise encourage Israel to expedite the initial withdrawal of its forces from the Gaza strip and the Jericho area, as well as from other occupied Arab territories. With such confidence-building in the peacemaking process in the Middle East, we feel the region will have truly achieved a reconciliation of peace and justice based on the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Starting in Madrid and ending in Washington, the process of this long-awaited peace accord is in fact the culmination of years of debate, deliberation and patience. My delegation recognizes the indispensable contributions of the Jordanian-Israeli peace negotiations to this end. The Royal Thai Government applauds the adoption of a common agenda between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as another hopeful contribution to a lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Thailand, like Jordan, fully understands the problems created by regional conflicts and refugee outflow, which affect neighbouring countries. My delegation salutes the Jordanian delegation for its country's acceptance and care of the large number of refugees, who, since 1948, have been fleeing turmoil and hardship in search of peace, tranquillity and a safe haven. In turn, we take heart in the adoption of this common agenda and hope that it will lead to further acceptance of mutually satisfactory solutions.

In a few days we will observe the forty-fourth anniversary of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians in the Near East. UNRWA, as it has come to be known, has functioned with resolve and efficiency. Operating under budgetary constraints amid the *intifadah* has indeed challenged the successful carrying out of UNRWA's mandate. However, UNRWA has done well. Within an extremely hostile environment, the Agency has been able to provide numerous services to millions of refugees in the region. Both primary and vocational training, overall health care and a drastic reduction in the mortality rate have contributed to the preservation of Palestinian culture and tradition.

While it is important that UNRWA continue to perform the difficult task of providing the necessary assistance to Palestinian refugees, we also believe that it should now focus on the effective implementation of an integrated programme of assistance, which is an integral part of the reconstruction and rehabilitation process. In this connection, the Royal Thai Government will continue to support the work of UNRWA until there is a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

An armed truce and a political solution alone are not enough to generate the economic and social well-being that is the essential precondition for a just and lasting peace. The work of UNRWA in the past has contributed significantly to the Palestinians' political struggle. In the opinion of my delegation, UNRWA's excellent record must be sustained; let us not forget that the refugees are not the responsibility of the United Nations alone but, rather, the responsibility of all civilized nations as members of the international community.

We have seen bitter foes shake hands and commit themselves to the prospect of peace. The Royal Thai Government would like to congratulate once again all parties to the historic agreements. Thailand stands ready to assist in the peace process and in the attainment of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace agreement. We are truly encouraged by the prospect of peace returning to the Holy Land.

Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait) *(interpretation from Arabic):* On behalf of the delegation of the State of Kuwait, I am pleased to express our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his efforts and for his reports on the situation in the Middle East.

The General Assembly considers today the item on its agenda at its current session entitled "The situation in the Middle East" against a background of dramatic changes on the international political scene and particularly in the Middle East. At the international level, and with the end of the cold war, cooperation has replaced confrontation between States; this has provided a new and unique opportunity for breaking the deadlock in the Middle East, as evidenced in the signing of the Palestinian-Israeli accord regarding Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, which is scheduled to begin, God willing, within the next two weeks.

We consider this accord to be merely a beginning for an integrated process to achieve a comprehensive peace based on Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Against this backdrop, the Assembly's consideration of the items on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East assumes special significance. We believe that, given that background, the Assembly's discussion of these issues does contribute to the creation of a favourable environment for making additional efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine, which lies at the root of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

There is no question that the achievement of a comprehensive, lasting and just settlement in the Middle East is a primary goal in terms of the preservation and maintenance of international peace and security. The peace process that began in Madrid and the bilateral and multilateral negotiations should be viewed as the right way to achieve permanent peace in the Middle East region, and they should therefore not be perceived as a win-or-lose game; rather, they should be seen as representing a window of opportunity enabling all peoples of the region to live in peace and security.

The important fact today is that the international community has now reached a consensus on the basic principles for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East based on the fundamental principle of land for peace. These principles can be summed up as follows: firstly, Israel must withdraw from occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Syrian Arab Golan, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); secondly, Israel must withdraw from southern Lebanon - in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) - and must respect the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders while refraining from interference in Lebanese domestic affairs; thirdly, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination must be recognized and implemented; and, fourthly, the right of all States in the region to live in peace and security within secure and internationally recognized borders must be respected.

Kuwait took part in the multilateral negotiations called for by the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East. Our conviction was then, and continues to be now, that a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East must be reached, and that the core of that problem is the question of Palestine. Any settlement should be based on international legality and the norms of international law.

One of the most important goals behind the establishment of the United Nations was to promote the development of friendly relations between States on the basis of respect for the principle of equality in rights and the right to self-determination of all peoples of the world, as is set out in the Charter of the United Nations. The right to self-determination is a basic national right for securing the other national rights of any people that has a sense of forming its own, independent national entity, namely, the rights to independence and sovereignty.

The right to self-determination must be implemented in the absence of external pressure and without repressive measures. Full respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people is an indispensable component of any just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We are deeply concerned about the continued deterioration in conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of the practices pursued by the occupation authorities. This deterioration has been occurring despite the promises and obligations those authorities made and assumed, especially those they made for this period in which there are high hopes of achieving a just peace.

Information contained in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People indicates that there has been a continuation and exacerbation of the serious violations of human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories resulting from the attempts to suppress the civilian Palestinian uprising which started some five and a half years ago.

We must put on record here that occupation is in itself a very serious violation of basic human rights; we in Kuwait know full well - and at first hand - what invasion and occupation mean, thanks to the brutal Iraqi aggression against my country.

We are convinced that the peace process should be accompanied by confidence-building measures to reduce the difficulties faced by the Palestinian people in its own

territory and by the improvement of the general political climate in the Middle East. Thus, we do not understand how Israel could take measures that are contrary to confidence-building. The Israeli Supreme Court handed down a ruling considering the Al-Aqsa mosque to be a part of the land area of the State of Israel and subjecting all restoration and maintenance work undertaken there to Israel's planning and building regulations and to its antiquities laws. That Israeli decision runs counter to the Security Council resolutions that deem null and void any attempt to alter the physical features of Jerusalem or any measures to annex the Holy City. In point of fact, we expect Israel to take measures in support of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement and to build bridges of confidence between the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples. What we are seeing today is contrary to our expectations. Those Israeli measures foreshadow adverse consequences and every effort should be made to forestall those consequences.

All parties, including the negotiating parties and those that can contribute to progress, should adopt a constructive and responsible approach and reject any steps that might complicate the peace process. We hope that the United Nations will promote the ongoing Arab-Israeli negotiations. All parties have welcomed the negotiations, and my country supports the suggestion made by the Secretary-General in his report that the efforts of the United Nations should be redoubled so that the Organization may participate in the negotiating process that all parties now welcome.

We should recall here that United Nations peace-keeping operations started in the Middle East and that in humanitarian, economic and social terms, the United Nations has an unbroken record of providing assistance in the region. Kuwait, along with other Arab countries, welcomes a supporting role for the United Nations in order to achieve a just and permanent settlement and to ensure the foundations of peace, most important of which is economic and social development, an essential component of international peace and security.

My country urges all parties concerned to adopt a sound approach in order to show good faith and build bridges of confidence. Once a permanent, just and comprehensive settlement is achieved, my country will support the efforts for peace and economic recovery in the region. The time has come to look beyond short-term considerations. We must have a clear vision of the future. The time is now ripe for restoring the trust of the peoples of the region by working to open up new prospects of tranquillity, prosperity, stability and progress, which would enable the Middle East region to continue to play its valuable role in the advancement of mankind.

Finally, we offer a prayer in praise of our Lord.

Mr. MOMIN (Brunei Darussalam): We welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli authorities and are pleased to note that negotiations between them are proceeding on the basis of that Declaration. However, we recognize that there is still a lot of work ahead if the Declaration is to be successful in practical terms. There appear to be a number of problems which could cause considerable difficulty, such as the status of Jerusalem, the disposition of Israeli settlements, and the question of refugees.

Brunei Darussalam hopes that the ongoing peace negotiations will lead to the eventual restoration of the Palestinians' inalienable rights, which include the right to an independent state for the Palestinians on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions. We further hope that this will in turn lead to a comprehensive and durable peace throughout the Middle East. We therefore believe that it is our collective responsibility to ensure that the hopes and aspirations expressed in the handshake between the Palestinian and Israeli leaders in Washington, D.C., on 13 September this year are fulfilled.

The signing of the Declaration has given the Palestinians new opportunities. However, they now face the task of ensuring economic and social development. The international community can help them in this regard, and Brunei Darussalam is willing to play its part.

We feel that if a lasting solution is to be found in the Middle East, support for the current peace process is needed not only from outside the region but also from everyone in the region. We urge all interested parties to take advantage of the new opportunities the peace process has opened up and to work not only towards the attainment of immediate goals but also towards long-lasting peace and stability in the region.

We wish to reiterate our view that the signing of the Declaration is but a step, albeit an important one, towards long-lasting peace and stability in the region. We also hope that the international community will support the process to ensure that the Middle East region, which has been the scene of so much hostility and violent conflict, will have peace and stability at last.

Mr. ABDULLAH (Indonesia): The past year will be recorded in the annals of history as the year in which significant initiatives were taken towards a negotiated solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Of particular importance in this regard is the repeal of the Israeli law against contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization

(PLO), the decision to negotiate directly with the representatives of the PLO, and, above all, the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. These are great strides made by the PLO towards the attainment of its long-cherished national and political rights. My delegation has equally welcomed the Agreement on the Common Agenda in the context of the Jordan-Israeli peace negotiations; that Agreement is the single most important step taken by Jordan and Israel towards a peace treaty within the framework of an Arab-Israeli settlement. Thus, it can rightly be said that there has recently been more progress towards peace in that region than at any time during the last decade and a half.

Our sense of optimism has been further bolstered by the encouraging comments made by many Member States in our debate during this session, particularly by the representatives of Israel, Jordan and the PLO. Against the backdrop of the trend towards peaceful resolution of conflicts in various regions, it is obvious that our attention should remain focused on the overriding issues in the Middle East and especially on the need for progress towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict that has for so long kept the region embroiled in a constant state of turmoil and turbulence. Hence, there is today an undeniable sense of frustration with the status quo which we share with the parties to the conflict and an insistence that negotiations be intensified within a mutually acceptable framework.

However, in sharp contrast to these positive trends, we are also aware of a deepening sense of disillusionment. It was the fervent hope of many Member States that the process of implementing the provisions of the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian self-rule would henceforth go forward with all deliberate speed and thereby provide much-needed momentum in addressing the various interrelated aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. To our profound dismay and disappointment, however, these negotiations have faced numerous obstacles and difficulties which are inconsistent with both the letter and the spirit of the Declaration. Further aggravating the situation is the persistence of Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories and the inflexibility Israel has shown in the negotiations, which cannot but have broader ramifications. We therefore deem it imperative that the gains achieved so far not be lost, and we call upon Israeli to redirect those negotiations with a view to achieving permanent peace in the region.

Of immediate importance in this context is the process of transferring power to the Palestinian authorities throughout the West Bank. This should be followed by sustained endeavours on other tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations based on the framework established by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and full withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon. Furthermore, we agree with the widely held view that the United Nations should play an active role, especially since the Organization has in the past made, and can in the future make, important contributions to peace in the Middle East. The task before us all is to foster productive negotiations; which continue to hold out the best hope for the real progress that is so essential to the people of the Middle East. We are fully aware that all basic issues must be resolved and that there will be no genuine peace unless the concerns of the parties for their territorial integrity, political independence and right to exist in peace are addressed, and the legitimate interests of all concerned, including the Palestinians, are taken into account.

Finally, my delegation has noted with profound gratification the positive developments that have taken place in Lebanon, especially the sustained progress made in national reconciliation and in the endeavours to ensure the full authority of the Government over all of its territory. Nevertheless, southern Lebanon continues to be under the occupation of surrogates set up by Israel. Indonesia has in the past condemned this illegal occupation and supported the resistance of the Lebanese people, who wish to liberate their country. We look forward to the day when the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon are restored and the authority of its Government prevails over all of its territory.

In the Middle East today there is a yearning for peace that perhaps surpasses any known in the past. Hence it is essential to ensure that the region will not relapse into another generation of strife and struggle, confrontation and instability, with the unthinkable consequences that would have. Instead, we should seize the historic opportunity now before us and marshall our collective commitment to making the ongoing peace process an irreversible turning point in history. The hopes and interests of the peoples of the Middle East and, indeed, of all the world call for the achievement of the common objectives of true peace, common security and generalized prosperity.

Mr. KOVANDA (Czech Republic): Due to its strategic, economic and cultural importance, the Middle East has been the Achilles heel of the whole world's security situation. The situation in the Middle East has erupted several times into wars. Today, after the hopeful results of the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Jordanian talks, we can say that the inflammation of this Achilles heel does not hurt quite as much. Yes, treatment has started. It will be complicated, expensive, long-term and

perhaps even painful, but in our opinion absolutely necessary. There is no alternative. The process has begun and we know that it is the only way to a resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict and a genuine settlement of the Palestinian question. The Middle East conflict amounts to an entire knot of problems which the parties concerned must resolve one by one until they are all sorted out.

In our view, tension in the occupied territories and throughout the region can be lessened only by a comprehensive and just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of the Palestinian question in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law. We appreciate the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles describes itself as part of an entire Middle East peace process and that the ensuing Israeli-Palestinian talks are designed to contribute to a settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We believe that this hopeful process will also contribute to the full re-establishment of the sovereignty of Lebanon over the south of its territory, on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). And, finally, the right of self-determination for all nations in the region, including the Palestinians, must be confirmed in all its aspects and within the framework of international law. I hope we shall see a lasting, comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East, a peace conducive to overall development, a peace which will contribute to stability and security throughout the world.

The Czech Republic welcomes without reservations the peace process in the Middle East. Especially now, as we are about to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 1994 and 1995, we wish to stress that we shall support this process in every way we can and so help bring it to a successful conclusion. We fully understand that the current negotiations are only the beginning of a very long and complicated process. We are at the beginning of a road with plenty of potholes ahead. But we believe that with the support of the world community - and I mean not only moral support, but also financial, technical and economic aid - this goal will prove to be attainable. My country, like many other countries of the world, is ready to take part in the programme of economic assistance to the Middle East and above all to the occupied territories.

The Middle East has the chance today to become an example for the settlement of other ethnic, religious and territorial conflicts in the world by political means. Now, after long decades of suffering and struggle and on the basis of their own experience, nations of the Middle East can demonstrate to the rest of the world that terrorism and all other types of violence do not lead to, but on the contrary work against, the settlement of such conflicts. The Czech Republic opposes efforts at violent resolution of conflicts, condemns terrorism and believes that the example of the Middle East will convince all those who still may doubt it that even conflicts as intractable as that in the Middle East can be resolved peacefully.

Other elements of the complicated situation in the Middle East have to be considered as well. Take, for example, the direct and extremely important influence of the situation in the Gulf on the rest of the Middle East. The aftermath of the Iraqi aggression against a sovereign and independent Kuwait shows how fragile the line between peace and war is and how important the role of the international community is for that region. We are heartened by the successes in the reconstruction of Kuwait, but at the same time we are aware of unfulfilled Iraqi obligations. I should like from this rostrum to confirm that the Czech Republic supports Kuwait in its rightful demands that Iraq comply with all resolutions concerning reparations of damages. We support Security Council resolution 833 (1993) relating to the boundary demarcation between Kuwait and Iraq, and we are especially aggrieved by the humanitarian problem of Kuwaiti citizens detained and missing in Iraq.

Today we also witness with satisfaction the peaceful reconstruction of Lebanon, which recently celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its statehood. Not long ago this country was on the brink of the abyss of destruction. Peace has been restored to this beautiful land and with it an outlook for a better future and prosperity. Here too, my country wishes to lend its hand and take part in specific reconstruction projects.

We share the hopes of most of the world with regard to the current developments in the Middle East. Those expectations are based on our belief that even such long-term and difficult conflicts as those that exist in that region can be settled in principle and that they can be settled by peaceful means.

Mr. AL-ZAABI (United Arab Emirates) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It is my pleasure to speak here today on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates on agenda item 34, "The situation in the Middle East." In that connection, I should like to extend to the Secretary-General of the United Nations our deepest thanks and appreciation for his sincere efforts in this field.

The entire world has welcomed the success achieved in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations as reflected in the Declaration of Principles signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel as a first step towards a just and durable peace in the Middle East. In this context we

would stress the need to achieve progress on the other related tracks towards an overall settlement of the Middle East problem, particularly at the levels of the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli negotiations.

Many efforts have been deployed and attempts have been made by certain States, at both the regional and international levels, to move those negotiations forward and to ensure their success. We hope that all such efforts and attempts will be crowned with success and lead to positive concrete steps towards the withdrawal by Israel from all occupied Arab territories, particularly the Syrian Golan Heights, Holy Al-Quds and southern Lebanon, as well as towards the implementation of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law relating to the treatment of civilian persons living under occupation, particularly the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

The international community has agreed that the question of Palestine is at the core of the problem in the Middle East. That is a recognized fact. The two issues are, therefore, interlinked and cannot be separated from one another. Given this fact, and in order to move the peace process forward towards a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we believe that the international community is in duty bound to deploy further efforts and to try harder to move the process of peace forward and to eliminate all obstacles and difficulties from its path.

There can be no doubt that one of the essential prerequisites for the success of the peace process in the Middle East is the creation of an atmosphere of confidence and political will. The steps now being taken towards peace are merely the first on a long and arduous road, one strewn with economic, political and security pitfalls.

The Foreign Minister of my country stated from this rostrum that the United Arab Emirates welcomed the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference and the holding of bilateral and multilateral negotiations, in the latter of which it participated. We have also welcomed the Declaration of Principles concluded between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel as a positive beginning and a first step towards a just, comprehensive and durable settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine, on the basis of international legality as reflected in the relevant United Nations resolutions, most notably Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the land-for-peace principle. Such a settlement should enable the Palestinian people to exercise their national inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, and bring about a total Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including the Golan Heights and the Holy City of Al-Quds.

He also declared the United Arab Emirates support for the sustained efforts undertaken by the fraternal Lebanese Government to extend its national sovereignty over all Lebanese national soil and called for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) as a contribution to the consolidation of peace and stability and to the creation of the conditions necessary for social and economic development.

We hope that the bilateral and multilateral negotiations will lead to the creation of a better situation on the ground and a new political environment throughout the Middle East, one of peaceful dialogue in the solution of disputes and disagreements and in which international and regional peace, security and stability will be promoted.

In conclusion I should like to stress the need for the United Nations and its specialized agencies involved with the question of Palestine and the problem in the Middle East to play an important role in promoting the current peace process in its developmental economic, social and political dimensions until peace, security and stability are achieved in that region, a peace based on justice, equality, respect for human rights, international law and international resolutions on the subject, so that the States and peoples of that region may live in durable peace and security and thereby achieve progress and prosperity.

Mr. Bull (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. BATU (Turkey): Over the past 45 years, the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict has been at the core of troubles in the Middle East and the direct cause of endless human suffering and a number of major wars. Turkey, being contiguous to this region, has a direct and natural interest in the Middle East and in the fate of its people. We therefore welcome this opportunity once again to set before the General Assembly our views on the Middle East question, which awaits a just and lasting settlement.

Since the debate in the General Assembly on this item last year, we have witnessed momentous developments. After years of hostilities, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) exchanged letters of mutual recognition. The signing in Washington of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the PLO and the ensuing Israeli-Jordanian Agreement on the Common Agenda for negotiations are historic steps which, we hope, will accelerate the peace process and culminate in a just and lasting settlement to

the Middle East conflict, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We would like to pay a tribute to President Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin for the statesmanship they displayed in overcoming all the obstacles on their path.

Turkey, having always considered the question of Palestine to be a core issue of the Middle East problem, has welcomed the Israeli-Palestinian agreement. We consider that agreement to be a first but essential step in an irreversible process, which must continue in all its aspects and lead towards the ultimate objective of achieving complete and lasting peace in the region. The momentum thus gained should be fully utilized with a view to ensuring the peaceful and timely implementation of the agreement and complementing it by result-oriented negotiations on Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian tracks. At this stage, both Israelis and Palestinians should realize that they have vital strategic interests in keeping the agreement viable and making the process irreversible. Both sides must try to understand the psychological changes that have to accompany the implementation of the agreement.

Continuing acts of violence remain a matter of great concern and we appeal to all parties to break the vicious circle of violence and reprisal.

Full compliance by the Israeli authorities with all of the universally accepted standards of human rights, and improved economic and social conditions for Palestinians to enable them to develop a viable economic infrastructure, are of the utmost importance in overcoming existing difficulties and moving the peace process forward. This would also ease the political tension in the whole region and prevent some extremist elements from gaining influence there. The holding of the International Donors Conference in Washington, which Turkey had the privilege of participating in and contributing to, and the establishment of a United Nations high-level task force are very important developments to that end.

It is precisely in this context that Turkey is prepared to offer its renewed support. We are prepared to contribute to the development of the Palestinian infrastructure in various fields. We can provide services and facilities in the areas of banking, finance, agriculture and tourism. We are prepared to provide technical assistance and training in various fields. We are ready to share the experience we had in resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees in our country in past years.

The recent agreement between Israel and the PLO has raised hopes and expectations about the beginning of a new era in the Middle East. Palestinian and Israeli leadership assumed a historic responsibility not only towards their respective peoples but *vis-à-vis* the peoples of all countries in the region. We have full confidence in their wisdom, vision and courage. At this stage we believe that our aim in the General Assembly should be to create an atmosphere conducive to the successful implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement and to encourage all participants in the peace process to work towards a more result-oriented involvement in the new environment.

Three years after the outbreak of the Gulf crisis the people of Iraq are still suffering hardship. This regrettable situation arose mainly from the reluctance of the Government in Baghdad to comply fully with the requirements of Security Council resolutions. Compliance by Iraq would clearly demonstrate the interest of that country in resuming its place in the international community. By recently accepting the obligations set forth in resolution 715 (1991), Iraq has taken an important step forward. We welcome this step and hope that this positive approach will continue and lead to further positive developments.

In the meantime the international community must help to relieve the suffering of the people of Iraq. We, for our part, have been to the fore in providing humanitarian assistance since 1991. The Turkish humanitarian assistance programme directed towards alleviating the situation of the entire population of northern Iraq, has been running smoothly. It is being implemented without prejudice to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.

Besides the people of Iraq, some others, particularly Iraq's neighbours, have been adversely affected by the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq. It would only be fair for the international community to find means to redress the mounting economic losses suffered by these countries.

I should like to conclude my statement by referring to the situation in Lebanon. Turkey has been following with keen interest the positive developments in that country. We attach great importance to the maintenance of Lebanon's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty. We support the efforts of the Lebanese Government to expand the Government's control and authority throughout all Lebanese territory. We stress the importance of full and strict implementation of the Taif Agreement by all parties concerned, and equally we stress once again the need for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), in which the Council calls upon Israel to respect the territorial integrity of Lebanon and to withdraw its forces to the internationally recognized boundaries.

Mr. MARKER (Pakistan): Today, the Middle East is at a crossroads. For the first time in decades, the region appears to have peace within its reach. Needless to say, a just and durable peace would permit the nations in the region to focus their efforts on the much needed improvement in the lives of their peoples.

Pakistan welcomes the ongoing negotiations for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East and appreciates the role played in this connection by the Governments of Norway, the United States of America and the Russian Federation. We share the hope that these talks will result in the early exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and will lead to the withdrawal of Israel from occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the Holy City of Jerusalem. We hope the final settlement will adequately address all aspects of the Middle East issue, including the return of refugees.

Pakistan's support for the just aspirations of the people of Palestine is well known. We endorse Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) as a basis for resolving the Middle East and Palestinian problems.

The agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel - the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian interim government arrangements in the occupied territories - is a welcome first step towards a comprehensive solution of the Middle East conflict, based on the formula of land for peace. We share the expectation of the international community that the agreement will be implemented, in letter and in spirit, and sooner rather than later. This initial accord could constitute a sound foundation for a durable peace in the Middle East.

The agreement regarding the agenda for the Jordanian-Israeli negotiations is a positive initial step. It now needs to be taken forward to its logical conclusion.

For peace to take firm root in the Middle East, it is equally important that progress be achieved at the same time on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks. Unless these fundamental aspects of the equation are also adequately addressed, peace will continue to elude the region.

It is essential to maintain the present momentum. The unfortunate events of recent days in the Gaza Strip should serve to strengthen the resolve of the parties concerned and spur them towards early agreements. Undue delays could only set the clock back. This moment must not be lost. The implications of such an eventuality are far-reaching. We urge the parties concerned - in particular, Israel - to demonstrate the requisite flexibility and accommodation. The need of the hour is a sincere commitment to the vision of a better tomorrow. Such a commitment must be reflected in tangible progress on the ground.

The United Nations must continue its efforts aimed at resolving the Middle East problem. The Organization and its specialized agencies have a special responsibility to expand assistance to the Palestinian people to help them to build the socio-economic infrastructure and national institutions that are essential to realization of the vision of peace, amity and prosperity in the Holy Land. In this connection, we welcome the recent initiatives taken by the Secretary-General.

The nexus between the political process and the socio-economic dimension of the problem cannot be denied. It will be crucial to lasting stability in the region. The Washington Conference of 1 October 1993 was a reflection of the determination of the international community to assist the parties in achieving this objective.

For its part, Pakistan is prepared to contribute to the establishment of a durable peace in the region on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreements between the parties concerned. We also stand ready to participate in national reconstruction efforts. Pakistan's links with the people of the Middle East are deep-rooted. We look forward to further strengthening the natural bonds of our common history.

Mr. ABU ODEH (Jordan) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: As this is my first address to the General Assembly during its forty-eighth session, I should like to express to Mr. Insanally of Guyana my delegation's warm congratulations on his election to the Presidency of the Assembly for the session. My country is confident, in view of Mr. Insanally's prudence, skills and distinguished administrative capabilities, that the deliberations of the Assembly will continue to proceed smoothly towards a successful conclusion, along the lines of the Charter.

I should like also to take this opportunity to express my delegation's sincere thanks and deep appreciation to Mr. Insanally's predecessor, Mr. Stoyan Ganev, for his able stewardship and his commendable contribution.

About two and a half months have passed since the most significant step was taken after the Madrid Middle East peace Conference that was convened three years ago. On 13 September 1993, the whole world witnessed the historic handshake between Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, following the signing of the Declaration of Principles and mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. In the historical

perspective of the Middle East conflict, that handshake represented the beginning of reconciliation between Palestinian nationalism and Israel.

That reconciliation is beginning to yield concrete, positive results. Suffice it to cite, in this context, the fact that the Palestinians and the Israelis have already set up joint action committees and are actively pursuing the implementation of the Declaration of Principles within the time-frames set forth therein.

When we remind ourselves that the question of Palestine is the core and essence of the Middle East conflict, it becomes unmistakably clear that that reconciliation was indeed the first important step towards a just, comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the entire Middle East conflict, on the basis of international legality. In point of fact, that single act in itself was bound to ripple out to the other bilateral tracks and to the multiple track. The fact that a joint agenda was signed by Jordan and Israel the very next day - 14 September 1993 - is clear proof of that fact. Similarly, the Donors' Conference that was held on 1 October 1993 is proof of the enormous significance of that landmark event. The Conference brought together 46 countries including the Palestine Liberation Organization and Jordan. The Conference's results were practical enough, meaningful and encouraging: the donors pledged specific financial contributions over the next five years to assist the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority that will be set up for Gaza and Jericho and cleared the way for assistance to the other parties involved in the peace process.

If the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles was the first tangible step towards peace, progress on the Jordanian-Israeli, Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks will be the factor that will ensure movement towards the comprehensive peace that the countries of the region and the international community have longed for as a prelude to lasting regional peace and security. The multilateral track is no less important than the bilateral tracks, for it involves 13 Arab States and Israel, together with the two co-sponsors - the United States and the Russian Federation - in addition to other participants from outside the region, including Japan, China, Canada, Australia, the World Bank and the United Nations. So far, this track has yielded results that have gone beyond the exchange of abstract ideas to cover tangible matters, such as feasibility studies, training programmes and the establishment of a Joint Jordanian-Israeli-American Committee within that framework. Moreover, some Arab capitals have already hosted the participants in those activities.

The implications of all this are quite obvious in terms of confidence-building between the parties to the conflict and underscoring the earnest nature of the peace process, while deepening the involvement of the international community in its various aspects.

Undoubtedly, all those achievements and developments are cause for optimism, joy and hope, as they demonstrate that the forces of peace, good and coexistence are on their way to triumph over the forces of war, evil and expansionism. They also prove that the two peace camps on the Arab and the Israeli sides are gaining strength and coherence while the rejectionists on the other side of the divide are getting more furious and exasperated. The yearning for a future of hope and good faith is steadily gaining ground as it gradually takes the place of the tendency to look back in anger and in fear.

Nevertheless, the very nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict - in terms of its deep roots, its implications and its accumulated negative effects, which have spanned this century to the extent of almost becoming part of the cultural heritage of both the Arabs and the Israelis - should alert us all to the fact that the road will not be smooth or easy. Setbacks should indeed be expected. The tensions and confrontations now rearing their heads in the occupied Palestinian territories are but sharp reminders of those pitfalls. In order to put things in perspective with a view to staving off despair and frustration, we have to remember that the wars fought by both sides over the years have themselves engendered major problems, each of which is sufficient to fuel yet another conflict unless adequately addressed in a bid for just resolution. The questions of Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, Jerusalem, the Golan and security are but examples. All these issues - and the list is not exhaustive - have been the subjects of resolutions adopted by the United Nations on the basis of its Charter and the norms of international law.

What encourages us in this context, however, is our conviction that we are on the right track, that the long-standing struggle of the Palestinian people has started to bear fruit, and that the parties involved in the peace process remain committed to their peace obligations and that they have agreed to include all these issues in the agenda for negotiations. It is our fervent hope that they will be able to resolve them in accordance with the tenets of international law. In our view, however, hope by itself is insufficient. We believe that the United Nations should lend its backing and support to the peace process.

My delegation recognizes the commendable efforts and contributions of the United Nations in the ongoing peace process. However, we maintain that the United Nations has a still more vital and a larger role to play along the following lines:

First, the United Nations should continue to be the baseline of international legality and the embodiment of the conscience of mankind in its reaffirmation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and all the other relevant resolutions relating to all issues emanating from the Arab-Israeli conflict which were adopted in the context of the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine.

And secondly, the United Nations should explore ways and means to reinforce the two peace camps on the Arab and the Israeli sides by the following means: United Nations Member States, specialized agencies, programmes and funds should provide support and assistance to the negotiating parties in the social, economic, cultural, developmental and humanitarian fields.

It is to be recalled, in this respect, that in addition to the PLO's pressing need for financial and technical assistance, required to establish from scratch an interim national authority, most other parties, including my country, are heavily saddled with foreign debt, and that such burdens pose serious financial obstacles which hamper our strenuous efforts to create an economic and psychological environment conducive to accelerating our pace in the peace process.

The United Nations should help the negotiating parties to deepen their political commitment to the peace process by supporting the progress made last September in the form of the Declaration of Principles and the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, as well as the Jordanian-Israeli joint agenda. In the past, the United Nations welcomed the Madrid conference. Today, we call upon the United Nations to support the most recent progress. That support should not be limited to words but should be translated into deeds.

The United Nations can also enhance the psychological commitment of the parties concerned to the peace process. That psychological commitment to ensuring the success of the peace process is no less important than the political commitment. In point of fact, the former constitutes the underpinning of the latter, for without the psychological component, the political undertaking could well turn into a tactical manoeuvre to buy time or to deceive the international community. Since the psychological commitment is a state of mind, its entrenchment or expansion will certainly need more than just political lip-service on the part of one side or the other. It is the common responsibility of all the negotiating parties, which makes it incumbent upon all of them, *inter alia*, to change the message contained in their political and public discourse. The United Nations, by preserving its role as the conscience of universal justice and international law, can indeed deepen the conviction in the peace option and the peace process. This, in turn, will strengthen the psychological commitment of the negotiators.

Accordingly, we must be careful to avoid the illusion that the United Nations role ended when Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles. It certainly did not. The United Nations must continue to play an active role until the protagonists reach the stage of implementing Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and until the Palestinian people are able to exercise their inalienable national rights, including the right to self-determination on their national territory and the establishment of an independent State of their own with Arab Al-Quds as its capital.

My country has been committed to work for peace since the door was opened for peace by Security Council resolution 242 (1967). We have reaffirmed our commitment to peace with our participation in the Madrid conference and by our having agreed to offer an umbrella for PLO participation in the negotiations. Thanks to that participation, the PLO has at long last been recognized as an independent partner in the peace negotiations. That has enabled the PLO to sign with Israel the Declaration of Principles, which is truly the first serious step towards a peaceful, comprehensive solution of the Middle East conflict.

Thus, Jordan's political commitment is strategic in nature, for it is anchored in our conviction that just and comprehensive peace in the entire region is an essential need for all its countries and its peoples. If that long-awaited dream comes true, the whole region will usher in a new era in its history. That will be a driving force that would propel our countries into new vistas of stability and peaceful coexistence. It would offer to the peoples of the region hope of leading a normal life after having been denied that blessing for five decades.

The Government of Jordan is fully aware of the rugged terrain we are charting and of the potential potholes. Nevertheless, we are determined to forge ahead, against all the daunting odds, in order to pursue peace. We shall deal, together with the Israeli side, with any problems that might arise down the road with a true sense of responsibility and dedication. Our ultimate goal will be comprehensive peace. What is at stake are the interests of our people, which firmly believes in the soundness of our approach. Now we have to pray and work with the United Nations and all other parties towards one common goal.

Mr. SUCHARIPA (Austria): "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." *(Isaiah 2:4)*

That is an urgent appeal voiced in a region thousands of years ago, in a region that has not been spared war, violence, chaos, tragedies or catastrophes throughout the centuries. Swords and spears may have gone many years ago, but they have been replaced by more dangerous and more devastating instruments of war, and misery and bitterness have continued, seemingly with no end in sight.

Until two years ago, Isaiah's appeal seemed to have remained unheard. Two years ago, in October 1991 in Madrid, all parties to the Middle East conflict sat around one negotiating table for the first time, deciding to talk to each other, both bilaterally and through a multilateral forum. From the very beginning it was clear that this process, aimed at reaching a just and lasting peace in the region and at overcoming deep-rooted enmities, would be protracted and that quick results or instant solutions should not and could not be expected.

Austria wholeheartedly welcomed the opening of the Madrid Conference, the entry into a new era. We also expressed our hope that all parties would agree to pursue the initiated dialogue as the only viable alternative to daily suffering, violence and bloodshed. As early as 1973, the then Austrian Federal Chancellor, Mr. Bruno Kreisky, made the following statement:

> "I do not believe that speaking to the Palestinians will endanger the existence of Israel. The time is ripe; we have to find viable partners for dialogue."

At long last this appeal has been realized.

Our support has always stemmed from our longstanding commitment to a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the manifold problems of the Middle East. Any solution must take into account the core issue of full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as it must also reflect the land-for-peace principle.

The developments that became visible and tangible early this summer represent a great step forward, a step which we would not have considered possible a year ago. I would like explicitly to commend the mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the ensuing signature on 13 September in Washington, D.C. of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles. We believe that the Israeli Government, with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, and the Palestine Liberation Organization, under Chairman Yasser Arafat, deserve the respect of the international community for their decision, which was both visionary and courageous.

The limited autonomy of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, as foreseen in the Declaration of Principles, is certainly only a first step and a partial solution to the legitimate claims and aspirations of the Palestinian people, but it shows the constructive approach adopted by all parties. Austria hopes that these agreements between Israel and the PLO will give a vital new impetus to the entire Middle East peace process. We hope that further progress in the bilateral negotiations between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon and - after the encouraging conclusion of a framework agreement for peace - between Israel and Jordan will soon be achieved so that, in the near future, a net of similar agreements will cover the whole region, guaranteeing stability, prosperity and lasting peace.

However, peace can be guaranteed only if the successes achieved at the negotiating table are reflected by conditions on the ground and if the various measures agreed upon are implemented without delay. Most recent events prove how fragile and vulnerable the atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding initiated on 13 September remains. Exposing it to setbacks and interruptions could still endanger the entire peace process and enhance frustration and radicalism on both sides. As a result, unfulfilled expectations, disappointment and bitterness would only lead to further outbreaks of violence. We therefore appeal to the parties in the region to do their utmost to avoid jeopardizing this precious momentum of peace and to show maximum restraint in their actions at these very crucial moments of a very difficult transitional process.

It is for the parties to the conflict themselves to prove their readiness to overcome old enmities, to reach across the deep rifts separating them and finally to start healing those rifts with confidence-building measures and deeds. Such actions are much more necessary than words, however promising they might sound. However, it is also up to the international community to lend its assistance, to back the process that has begun and especially to alleviate the ongoing plight of the Palestinians living in the occupied territories under extremely difficult economic, social and humanitarian circumstances. We are therefore satisfied with the outcome of the pledging conference that took place on 1 October in Washington, D.C. and I may recall in this context that Austria has committed itself to assistance to the Palestinians amounting to approximately $17 million over the next 5 years. We believe that concrete projects in the occupied territories, and especially in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, relating to

infrastructure, health care, agriculture and other job creating investments, are of utmost importance to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian population. We also welcome the establishment of a high-level task force by the Secretary-General in response to requests from both Israel and the PLO. We are convinced that this task force, which will focus on the economic and social development of the Gaza Strip and Jericho, will play an important role in supporting a coordinated approach towards development in these areas.

Austria has also become a full-fledged partner of the multilateral peace negotiations. From the beginning, Austria has held the view that the multilateral peace process, as initiated in January 1992 in Moscow and conducted since then in five parallel working groups, is an important corollary to the bilateral peace negotiations. Austria has therefore appealed several times to all parties directly concerned to take an active part in the multilateral negotiations in order to achieve concrete and quick results. In this regard, I wish to reiterate the appeal to Syria and Lebanon to join the multilateral track as soon as possible. This would also benefit the bilateral process, as both tracks are interrelated and stimulate and invigorate each other.

Austria has not only taken an active part in the deliberations of all working groups; it has also in the meantime submitted concrete proposals for cooperation among the partners in the region. Thus, Austria is executing, together with the Commission of the European Communities, a feasibility study on the connection of electric networks in the Middle East. Furthermore, we intend to help build a basic health care administration in the occupied territories and to promote such environmental projects as a databank and the establishment of a code of conduct for the harmonization of national environmental regulations.

But Austria's active involvement in the multilateral peace process also involves our readiness to host meetings of working groups or intersessional activities. I recall that Vienna was the venue of the first meeting of the working group on water resources in May 1992, and that it hosted in June 1993 a water technology seminar and in October 1993 a seminar on confidence-building measures and long-term perspectives, all of which have turned out to be very useful additions to the activities of the working groups.

Peace in the Middle East has never been as near as it is today, peace that, with the help of us all, the parties directly concerned and the international community, could soon become reality, to the benefit of the entire region and its population. We hope that the ancient appeal will then have turned into a true prophecy: neither shall they learn war any more.

Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal): Nepal has been a staunch supporter of the Middle East Conference, launched in Madrid in 1991. We have been supportive of the painstaking consultations undertaken by the sponsors to move the process forward at a quicker pace. My delegation therefore fully shares the view that the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the leaders of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was a historic breakthrough. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the courage and vision of the leaders of Israel and the PLO. I wish also to place on record our appreciation of the important role the Government of Norway played in bringing about this breakthrough.

The Declaration has established a set of bold objectives. The first major step - the conclusion of negotiations on Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, to be effective by April 1994 - is set for mid-December. Winning peace in the Middle East is up to the parties concerned. My delegation is heartened by the demonstrated desire for peace and by the determination to pursue negotiations in good faith on the part of the leadership of both Israel and the PLO. The continuation of negotiations and the realization of tangible results on the ground are important to keep the momentum alive.

It is equally essential that the Palestinian people have evidence that peace will make a difference in their lives. The international community has an important role to play in achieving this goal. The meeting held in Washington in October this year sent out a message of commitment to improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the short term and to putting in place a long-term structure for economic growth.

The ultimate goal of the process is to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, in keeping with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The breakthrough in Israeli-PLO relations must be strengthened by progress in other tracks of bilateral negotiations. The progress in the Israel-Jordan talks is a welcome development.

Progress in the talks between Syria and Israel would be a crucial element of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Nepal sincerely hopes that both countries remain committed to a negotiated settlement of their dispute. Likewise, my delegation looks forward to early and tangible progress in the Israel-Lebanon negotiations. We support the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Our continued participation in the

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon is an expression of this commitment.

The regional aspects of the peace process include crucial matters related to security, water, environment, economic development and refugees. Nepal supports the call to make the Middle East a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Accession by all States in the region to existing international instruments will be a major step in this direction. Participation of all countries in the region, and particularly of Syria and Lebanon, in the multilateral negotiations is essential for effective regional cooperation.

Because of its historic association with the situation, the United Nations has a vital role to play in strengthening the momentum towards a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Several United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, are engaged in valuable humanitarian work. The United Nations agencies responsible for operational activities for development have the challenge of working to broaden economic interaction throughout the region. The peace-keeping operations in the region, by maintaining stability within their respective mandates, are helping give peace a chance.

The Middle East was at the heart of the first post-cold-war international consensus to uphold the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. Given continued goodwill and determination, the Middle East can be the foundation of a peaceful and stable post-cold-war international order. The international community has a duty to encourage the march towards that goal.

Mr. BREITENSTEIN (Finland): In recent years we have seen events and developments in the world which would have been labelled wishful thinking only five years ago. The most recent and the most welcome was the historic handshake between Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat. The Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as well as their reciprocal recognition, manifest a historic change in the long conflict in the Middle East.

This was the first significant and concrete result of the Madrid process, initiated two years ago and co-chaired by the United States and the Russian Federation. The key factor which made the agreement between the PLO and Israel possible was the admirable personal courage and constructive approach of the leaders on both sides. However, the discreet and imaginative assistance rendered by Norway during the long and confidential negotiations also deserves the admiration of all of us.

The Government of Finland welcomes these agreements. We believe that the prerequisites for a comprehensive solution based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and for lasting peace in the region have now been created after decades of violence. Such a lasting peace can be achieved only by providing for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the security of all States in the region, including Israel.

We hope that the agreements between Israel and the PLO will also contribute to agreements being reached in the peace negotiations between Israel and the other negotiating parties: Jordan - hopefully, soon to be concluded - Syria and Lebanon.

The events that have taken place to date demonstrate that it is indeed possible to make progress through peaceful negotiations. With this historic breakthrough, the Middle East peace process has taken a remarkable leap forward. It has provided an opportunity for all States in the region to find a new basis for their mutual relations.

To secure continued progress, the international community must do its share to help the parties in tangible ways. It is crucial that everybody is shown that peace will indeed bring its benefits, in the form of growing incomes, better standards of living, better services and, most of all, improved security.

Reconstruction in the areas to be brought under Palestinian self-rule should be launched without delay. International support for this demanding task will be of vital importance. It was gratifying, therefore, that some 45 donors, Finland among them, gathered in Washington, D.C., on 1 October 1993 and pledged altogether over $2 billion in aid, over five years, for Gaza and Jericho. This outstanding result gives us hope that our expectations can be fulfilled.

Finland, like the other Nordic countries, is committed to participating fully in the reconstruction and development efforts in Gaza and Jericho. At this point, an amount of 40 million Finnish markkaa has been pledged as our contribution for this purpose. Part of that sum - 10 million Finnish markkaa - will be available as early as this year for short-term needs, through the World Bank and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The rest will be directed towards reconstruction and development projects in the Palestinian self-governing areas.

To create better living conditions, a solid economic basis is necessary. This will be achieved by creating an environment conducive to enterprise and trade rather than through a reliance on continued outside assistance.

Barriers to communications and trade in the region should therefore be lowered and even abolished.

We believe that normal, unhampered trade relations and economic cooperation would be of significant benefit to the whole region. Ending the trade boycott against Israel would be a constructive measure on the part of the Arab States.

Unfortunately, the favourable and encouraging developments are being overshadowed by continuing violence. The vicious circle of violence must be stopped, as it will cause nothing but suffering and destruction. Any disagreements must be expressed and solved peacefully. We therefore urge all parties and groups to refrain from all acts of violence. We trust that the authorities too will refrain from an excessive use of force in maintaining law and order, and that the law will be enforced for all alike.

We understand fully that the work has only just begun and that many obstacles remain. New solutions cannot be found overnight. However, through patient negotiation, mutual trust and a recognition of the other side's needs, progress can be made and this historic process transformed into action in concrete terms. In other words, confidence-building measures are required from all parties.

In this respect, it is essential that the necessary solutions are found to the practical problems by the target date of 13 December, thus enabling the implementation phase of the peace settlement to begin. We therefore urge both parties to continue their efforts towards that end in the same spirit of compromise and conciliation that they have already shown.

The United Nations, faithful to its mission, should make its contribution towards making this process a success. For it to be able to do so, its actions must be wise and likely to create confidence in its capacity to contribute in a meaningful and impartial manner.

In practical terms, over the years the United Nations has done valuable work in favour of the refugees. However, a number of past resolutions of the General Assembly have not been helpful. We hope that in this respect too we can turn the page on the past. My delegation therefore welcomes the spirit of cooperation that has made it possible to present a new draft resolution reflecting the progress made in the peace process. My delegation gives its full support to the draft resolution, and hopes that it will be approved by consensus.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members of a change in our programme of work. The consideration by the General Assembly of agenda item 42, "The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina", originally scheduled for Friday, 3 December, is postponed to Friday, 17 December, in the morning.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.